



## HIV AND STD PREVENTION FOR MSM

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

Despite significant declines in HIV infection rates among men who have sex with men (MSM) since the early years of the epidemic, MSM continue to be the population at highest risk for HIV and many STD infections. The HIV epidemic, which began primarily among white gay men, is now also dramatically affecting African-American and Latino MSM. Although there have been significant reductions in high-risk behaviors among MSM, recent outbreaks of STDs, including syphilis, have occurred among MSM in urban areas, signifying the presence of unsafe behaviors that make this population vulnerable to continued STD and HIV transmission. Prevention efforts must be expanded to reach MSM of all races, must be sustained over time, and must be initiated anew for each generation to maintain effective behavior change in these high-risk populations.

### WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

Several factors may be contributing to recent increases: difficulty in practicing safer sex every time; incorrect assumptions about partner's infection status; less concern about infection due to new treatments; lack of direct experience with HIV or STDs; and racism, stigma and lack of services. Effective HIV and STD prevention approaches should address audiences in terms appropriate for their age and relevant to their culture and lifestyle. Research has shown that programs that are interactive, work to build communications skills and self-esteem, and use peer leaders as role models are most effective.

At the same time, there is a need for increased behavioral research to develop and refine effective prevention programs that address the unique needs of MSM of color. CDC has prioritized prevention for MSM in its strategic plans for HIV and STD, with the goal of significantly reducing the disease toll among high-risk populations. CDC is also conducting a four-project epidemiologic study of risk behaviors of African-American and Latino MSM to improve understanding of risk influences.

*Example of program in action:* Bienestar Human Services' *Sabores (Flavors) Program* provides outreach, prevention case management, individual- and group-level interventions, and HIV counseling, testing and referral for Latino/Hispanic young men who have sex with men (YMSM) in East Los Angeles and Pomona, CA. During the first year of the program, more than 1,500 YMSM were contacted during outreach, provided risk-reduction information, and referred for other prevention services; 144 participated in group of individual level interventions, 61 received prevention case management services, and more than 1,000 clients attended informational events. Clients have reported a decrease in high-risk behavior, greater social connectedness, and a decrease in depression.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Additional behavioral research that better measures HIV and STD risk are needed to understand contemporary risk influences and inform the development of new interventions for gay men. Social, behavioral and health care services should be supported and expanded. Evaluation and close collaboration with CDC's community-based and health department partners are key to this effort.

For information about this or other CDC programs, visit [www.cdc.gov/programs](http://www.cdc.gov/programs).

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